

NCBCE Partner Survey Results

Executive Summary

Fundamental skills, cooperation and personal ethics emerge as the most important qualities that potential employees in the workplaces of the 21st century should get from their high school experience, according to North Carolina Business Committee for Education (NCBCE) members who participated in an online survey conducted by NCBCE. Respondents said ALL of the skills and qualities surveyed were 'at least at or above average' in importance.

The **primary goal** of the research is to obtain from NCBCE members (well-respected North Carolina employers) **an assessment about which skills and qualities are the most important** for today's students to succeed **in tomorrow's workplace environment**. NCBCE's **ultimate goal** is to use that information to **recommend changes to high school curricula and student assessments**, as well as **professional development for teachers** in order to provide high school students with the education they will need to succeed in the 21st century workplace.

NCBCE members were asked to assess 15 skills, qualities and areas of knowledge in terms of their importance to high school graduates preparing to enter the workforce. For each topic, respondents were asked to give a **ranking** of 'Very Important,' 'Somewhat Important,' 'Average Importance,' 'Not Too Important,' or 'Unimportant'. Open-ended responses were invited in search of input not otherwise solicited.

The **overall tone of the responses was positive**, indicating that business leaders identify all the skills and qualities surveyed as important in the 21st century workplace. In addition, open-ended responses offered as part of the survey further support the finding that NCBCE members stress the combination of fundamentals and personal values.

NCBCE members said in their survey responses that high school students need a strong grasp of educational fundamentals (reading, writing, mathematics, and now computer skills) combined with a good work ethic (good character, reliability, teamwork, respect) to succeed in the 21st century workplace.

North Carolina Business Committee
for Education
www.ncbce.org



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Executive Summary—Conclusions

NCBCE members who responded to the survey ranked the skills in **three distinct groups**: the **five most important**, the next **seven** that were **important** and the last **three** which were rated as **somewhat important**.

Five ‘Most Important’ Skills

- Apply basic mathematical concepts and skills.
- Work effectively as a member of a team.
- Use and integrate information and communication technology.
- Conduct oneself appropriately in line with social responsibility and sound ethics.
- Read and comprehend materials of varying complexity.

Seven ‘Important’ Skills

- Clearly communicate ideas and comments orally.
- Be a self-starter and take personal responsibility.
- Incorporate fundamentals, such as good grammar, spelling and sentence structure, in written communications.
- Identify a problem, develop and evaluate creative alternatives and recommend a solution.
- Demonstrate flexibility by adapting to people, new situations and challenges.
- Understand the sciences and their relevance and application in today’s society.
- Understand and be sensitive to cultural/ethnic differences.

Three ‘Somewhat Important’ Skills

- Understand history, civics, government and economics and their relevance and application in the 21st century.
- Display leadership skills.
- Communicate in two or more languages.

In conclusion, the survey showed that NCBCE members—even though they clearly prioritized fundamental skills and sound personal values as the most important skills and qualities students need to succeed in the 21st century workplace—consider all of the skills and qualities as important.